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## **Defeat the McCaskill /Toomey Bill Banning Earmarks**

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Senators Claire McCaskill (D-MO) and Patrick Toomey (R-PA) announced they will introduce a bill that would ban earmarks by law. This is just another example of congresspersons doing something for publicity's sake and not to promote good government.

Earmarks are not inherently bad and they usually don't cost taxpayers additional money. In most instances, the earmark is for funds that are approved for a particular agency and if the Congress doesn't tell the agency how to spend some of the approved funds, the agency will spend it on something they want. Doing away with earmarks is giving authority on all funds appropriated by Congress to the Executive Branch; it is not saving money. I agree with Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-CA) when she says, "I think members of Congress know their districts pretty well and know what they need." "By banning [earmarks] entirely, we are giving all the power to the administration. I don't care if it's a Democrat or a Republican in the White House, they should not have that power."

Are there absurd earmarks? Of course there are! Are there absurd programs funded by federal agencies without the funds being earmarked? Of course there are! But there are also some really important earmarks which are placed in an appropriations bill because if they aren't their agencies have little opportunity/incentive to fund the specific project.

We should reform the earmark process, not eliminate it and pander to those who have used its demise for political propaganda. There are a number of ways to reform it. One would be for each congressperson who requests an earmark to not only attach his/her name to it but to have to report it online. If the earmark is for a congressperson's own district, they would have to ask for quarterly reports from the earmark recipient and then be required to post those online. That

way their constituents, and anyone else, would see who is receiving an earmark, what it is for, who the congressperson is responding too and they can then decide if they feel that the project funded was worthwhile.

There are also earmarks which fund more national projects. These should be placed online by the committee in whose bill they were included and the quarterly reports would be requested by the committee and posted. Each recipient of an earmark in addition to having to file a report with the agency from which the funds came would be required to file a report with the congressperson who asked for the earmark and/or the committee in whose bill it was placed.

There are many ways to make the process more open and effective but killing earmarks because it is momentarily feel good politics isn't the way to go. Senators McCaskill and Toomey should find better things to do with their time. I am sure the residents of Missouri and Pennsylvania would rather they focus on a jobs bill and on making sure that as the economy begins to improve it impacts them rather than being pandered to with this side issue.

For years we have seen presidents of both parties running for reelection traveling the country awarding special grants to states and communities for all kinds of things to win votes. They use the money Congress has appropriated and if there were an earmark on some of the money there would simply be a little less for Presidents to dole out on their own. I opposed President Obama when he came out against earmarks but I understood it. It was good politics and gave him more money to spread around on his own. He should thank John McCain (R-AZ) for that as he was the person that kept raising the issue in the last election but didn't explain to the American people the real story about how the \$30 billion allocated to earmarks would still be spent if those earmarks were eliminated. There was never a push by McCain, other members of Congress, or the president to rescind the \$30 billion in earmarked money included in the spending authority for the agencies once they weren't told how to spend it. They simply got to spend it anyway they wanted.

The American people deserve the truth about earmarks and I urge the other members of Congress to defeat the McCaskill/Toomey bill.